

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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LONDON PLS PASS AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV PINT NL
SUBJECT: CABINET CRISIS: WHERE DOES IT LEAVE DEN UYL?

REF: THE HAGUE 1492

1. PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL EMERGES MORNING AFTER THE FALL OF
HIS CABINET AS TIRED AND SAD BUT STILL EVERY INCH APOLITICIAN
--EVEN A BIT OF A STATESMAN--WHO CONTINUES TO HAVE HIS EYE
FIXED UNWAVERINGLY ON LEADING A NEW LEFT/CENTER COALITION
AFTER THE MAY 25 ELECTIONS.

2. THE MOOD FOR SUCH A COALITION, BECAUSE OF CATHOLIC
JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT'S DEFECTION IS NOT EXACTLY ROSY AT
PRESENT. LABOR PARTY LEADERS ARE SORE AND HAVE BEEN UNANIMOUS
IN DECLARING THEIR DISGUST OF THE MAN THEY SAY TRIPPED THEM
JUST SHORT OF THE FINISH. BUT THE FACT THAT VAN AGT HAS MADE
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HIMSELF "PERSONA NON GRATA" TO THE SOCIALIST WILL NOT KEEP
THEM FROM COOPERATING WITH OTHER CDA POLITICIANS IN AN EFFORT
TO CONTINUE THE CENTER-LEFT CHRISTIAN-SOCIALIST COALITION.
THERE IS ALSO PLENTY OF EVIDENCE THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE CDA
PARLIAMENTARY PARTY CONTINUES TO LEAN TOWARD A CONTINUATION
OF THE PRESENT COALITION AFTER THE ELECTIONS, RECENT
DIFFICULTIES NOTWITHSTANDING.

3. ONE OF DEN UYL'S POLITICAL HALLMARKS HAS BEEN A TENDENCY--IN CONTRAST TO THE PRACTICE OF EARLIER PRIME MINISTERS--TO PROJECT HIMSELF PRIMARILY AS A LEADER OF HIS SOCIALIST CONSTITUENCY AND ONLY SECONDARILY AS A PRIME MINISTER OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. ON ONE NOTABLE OCCASION, HOWEVER, IN HANDLING THE LOCKHEED BRIBERY SCANDAL INVOLVING PRINCE BERNHARD LAST YEAR, HE ACCENTUATED THE PROFILE OF A NATIONAL LEADER, THEREBY DRAWING CONSIDERABLE ADMIRATION AND PRAISE AND EMERGING OUT OF THAT RATHER SORDID AFFAIR AS THE ONLY MAJOR PARTICIPANT WHOSE IMAGE WAS SUBSTANTIALLY STRENGTHENED. THROUGHOUT THE CURRENT CRISIS, AS MANY TIMES BEFORE, DEN UYL HAS CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THAT WITH SUFFICIENT POLITICAL WILL TO STAY TOGETHER THE CABINET UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP COULD SURMOUNT ANY POLITICAL OBSTACLE. HE MAINTAINED THIS ATTITUDE TO THE END, SETTING THE STAGE FOR PUTTING THE BLAME FOR THE CURRENT CRISIS ON JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT AND HIS CDA SUPPORTERS. HIS ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE CHAMBER, AFTER OFFERING HIS CABINET'S RESIGNATION TO THE QUEEN, HAD A STATESMANLIKE QUALITY. THE SETTING, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ALONE ON THE GOVERNMENT BENCHES AND ALL TV CAMERAS FOCUSED ON HIM, ACCENTUATED A PERFORMANCE WHICH LEFT NO ONE IN DOUBT THAT HE MAY BE DOWN BUT BY NO MEANS OUT.

4. DEN UYL'S TACTIC AT PRESENT IS TO GET THE QUEEN, WHO UNDER THE CONSTITUTION MUST CONSULT A WIDE RANGE OF POLITICAL LEADERS, TO ASK THE ENTIRE CABINET TO STAY ON IN A CARETAKER CAPACITY. SUCH A CABINET WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE MAJOR DECISIONS ON DOMESTIC POLICY BUT COULD BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO PROJECT A STRONG FACE TO THE OUTSIDE. AT ROME, FOR INSTANCE, HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE A STRONG LINE ON THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF EC REPRESENTATION AT THE SUMMIT, SECURE OF THE UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF THE SECOND CHAMBER (THE HAGUE 1426). THUS, EVEN THOUGH HE WOULD BE PRIME MINISTER ONLY OF A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, DEN UYL WILL NEVERTHELESS RETAIN THE IMAGE AND CHARISMA OF LEADERSHIP.

5. WITHIN HIS PARTY, THE RECENT UNPLEASANT EPISODE MAY HAVE SOMEWHAT STRENGTHENED THE DISPOSITION OF SOME OF THE PARTY FAITHFUL TO MAINTAIN DOCTRINAL PURITY IN AN OPPOSITION ROLE. THE BULK OF THE PARTY, HOWEVER, WILL NO DOUBT AGREE DEN UYL THAT IT IS BETTER TO CONTINUE IN GOVERNMENT AND THEREBY MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL FOR ACHIEVING THEIR SOCIAL AND OTHER POLICY OBJECTIVES. OUTSIDE HIS PARTY, IT MAY WELL BE THAT WHAT HAPPENED TO DEN UYL YESTERDAY HAS CAST HIM SOMEWHAT IN THE ROLE OF AN UNDERDOG. THIS COULD PAY HANDSOME DIVIDENDS ON ELECTION DAY. SOCIALIST POLITICIANS TODAY, WHILE BEMOANING THE FACT THAT THE CABINET WAS BROUGHT DOWN SHORT OF ITS ELECTED

MANDATE, ARE CLEARLY UPBEAT AS THEY LOOK TO ELECTIONS.
BROWN

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